

The Republican.

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CRISIS.—No. VII.

THE Crisis of Europe alone remains to be decided. South America might now be considered one vast republic: Spain can do no more to prevent it. In short, the whole of the Western Continent, with its islands, will be emancipated from European controul, as sure as the returning day. The English Monarchy must now be very humble and civil to the Republics of America, or the first insult or offence she offers, they will dispossess her of all islands and colonies there. Matters are proceeding very well in Europe. The stand that the patriotic army makes in Spain against the slavish royalists, is a strong presumption that they will finally succeed; as yet there are no troops that dare to attack them, whilst they are already capable of acting on the offensive. The Regency of Portugal appear to have taken the alarm, and are afraid to communicate the particulars of the revolt to their subjects. It is a most cheering account to hear, that the Spanish officers urge on the army the necessity of a representative government: this looks well. We shall shortly have to pension and support the whole Spanish priesthood, with the contents of their Holy Inquisition, their monasteries, and convents, with his most Catholic Majesty to the bargain. It is a very fortunate circumstance that he has learned to use the needle; for it appears more than probable, that he will have to turn his hand to something else besides monarchy very shortly. The revolution in Spain has begun at the right end, for it is very difficult to get an unarmed and undisciplined people to act against a military body. Another month will settle the matter in Spain, if no other power interferes. Those matters are becoming very contagious. The shackled press is better than none. The exercise of the press is like the education of an individual, you may guide it in its infancy, but when the mind becomes expanded, and the idea ripe, it will follow the course of truth and nature: so it is with the press, you may attempt to regulate it by certain

VOL. II. No. 5.

1

T. DAVISON, Printer, 10, Duke Street, Smithfield.

modes and forms, but to a discriminating people it cannot fail to be useful. They can easily perceive the part that prostitutes itself, from the part that studies to convey wholesome truths; and the impression of the latter becomes the stronger, in consequence of the vicious efforts of the former. It may be possible to impede; but to subvert is impossible. The next generation will enjoy its benefits without impediment or fear. It is even now a struggle between the press and the despot; and the existence of the latter is not certain for a moment: the former cannot die: it is the only thing yet discovered for the use of man that shall continue to benefit succeeding generations. A combination of circumstances are effectually at work in England. Although the would-be-tyrants have lopped off the sale of a few thousand political pamphlets weekly, they have not lessened the quantity of political matter, nor the extent of reading; for by increasing the price and the bulk, they have diminished the variety, and the individual who was in the habit of purchasing three or four of a different sort weekly, find the same variety of matter in one under the present regulation. If Castlereagh was as wise as he is *enterprising*, he would make a virtue of necessity, and declare himself the friend of a free press and public liberty. That portion of the press which he now terms *respectable* would be equally willing to shift with him whilst he leads the Administration. If his object be to add titles and honours to his progeny, he will find his account in my recommendation; for all titles and honours acquired under the present system, will be found empty and degrading things in the next generation. It is not the revolution of England alone that I look at, it is the revolution of Europe. If ever the inhabitants of Europe expect to live in concord within their own states, and with each other, they must form their governments on the basis of an universal representation. Monarchy will always be at war with monarchy, or with its own subjects; it is an unnatural production, against which all nature cries aloud. The death of an individual member of a family who reigns by hereditary right, makes fools and hypocrites of nearly all the nation. What have we lately witnessed throughout the country? A whole people, or a great majority of them, weeping and laughing, mourning and rejoicing, sad and merry on the very same occasion. If it was decent to weep for the individual who filled the office of King, it would have followed as a matter of course, that the same decency should have

suppressed all outward exultation for the accession of his successor; because it is a lawyers' maxim that "the King never dies," and therefore any approbation at the accession of George the Fourth, implies that we rejoice at being rid of George the Third.* But *Royalty* is like *libel*, indefinite; can be twisted to any thing, and made to answer every vile purpose that may suit the views of a corrupt and ruling party. Can this mixture of mirth and sorrow be natural? What means all this continuation of black-lined and bordered newspapers, which looks about as ridiculous as their several Editors would with a fool's cap on their heads, and which their present conduct and detestable lies and cant about his "late Majesty," well deserve. If we wish a true picture of the late King we have only to read "Peter Pindar's" poems, which were once the subject of admiration in Carlton House. Away with this idle and foolish subject about Kings, and let us turn to something rational.

The future historian, that shall have to write the Decline and Fall of Monarchical Governments, will discover his principal cause to be in the independence of the United States of America, and the stamina it afforded the philosophers of that day to espouse the cause of a republican form of government. Louis the Sixteenth, little thought when he lent his aid to the Americans, that he was assisting in preparing the machine for his own decapitation. But such was actually the case. There are many instances in the history of monarchy, which might be compared to the hog, who whilst he attempts to swim to save his life, is said, by his form of swimming, to cut his own throat. Thus it was with Louis of France; for in attempting to lessen the power of an haughty and insolent neighbour, he kindled the fire among his own subjects, that brought him to an untimely end. The productions of the French Philosophers of the last century are as yet but little known in England. Their progress is slow, but daily increasing. They have laid the foundation for the future well-being of society in general. It is evident that those principles are too deeply rooted in France to be removed by design or stratagem; it is therefore probable, that from France they will emanate as from a well-supplied *reservoir*. Those who are now called the "infidel philosophers" of France, will shortly be hailed as the benefactors of the hu-

* Several of the slavish newspapers have stiled him George the Good!!!

man race. A few years cessation of arms among the Despots of Europe, is all that is necessary to this great accomplishment. And it does not appear likely that they will again be rash enough to attempt to suppress an infant republic: the chastisement they received from France will make them "*look before they leap.*" It is much to be lamented, that the French writers should have been so situated as to have been under the necessity of placing fictitious names to their productions. The best of the French productions are evidently under fictitious names. The writers and compilers of their grand Encyclopædia found it necessary to be anonymous, or to adopt fictitious names. Voltaire at present stands most conspicuous among them, because a collection of his writings have been made, and they are easily known by their stile; but in my opinion he has been excelled by *Diderot*, *Freret*, and *Baron Holbach*, whose writings I am not aware have been regularly collected, as they generally wrote under assumed names, and too often adopted the names of some less able cotemporaries. It is generally believed that that excellent work which bears the title of "*Mirabaud's System of Nature*," is the production of *Diderot*; as it has been asserted (I believe by *Voltaire*,) that *Mirabaud* was not capable of writing a page of it. "*Volney's Ruins of Empires*" having met an excellent translation, have found a great circulation in England, at least to the extent of 30,000 copies. It is an excellent work as a rudiment to civil and religious liberty. The writings of Paine have followed it, laying down a more fundamental principle; as plain and experimental facts are sure to make greater impression on the human mind, than facts disguised in metaphor. Volney's "*Ruins*," as a metaphorical work, is certainly useful; it made the first impressions on my mind; and I believe it has led thousands besides myself to a search after truth. But Paine has applied himself more particularly to the English nation, and the English people: being a native of this country we are apt to prize him higher. By reading the writings of Paine I assumed courage: the more I read, the more I was convinced of their importance; and I went on until I came to the resolution that no portion of them that I could reach, should remain any longer obscure in this country for want of a publisher. But as yet the thing is not half done. I was in hopes of seeing some other person start an edition immediately after my confinement. If half a dozen individuals would make up their

minds to act thus, indictments and informations would avail but little. There should always be a mart for them somewhere. I had made a calculation for two or three years imprisonment, therefore it has come to me as a matter of course.

I find much wanton and unnecessary restraint here, but nothing of the kind can render me unhappy, whilst I can find means of preserving my health for another campaign. We want a little of that enthusiasm that was displayed by the early Christians; but it happens that we have no Heaven—no crowns of glory to offer our advocates, unless they will be content with a crown of laurel leaves. Most certainly the idea of eternal life, connected with consummate bliss, and eternal happiness, is a state much to be desired: but as we have no desire to impose on the weak minded, we cannot promise such things; and therefore must be content to proceed with a slow but sure step. Mahomet added to his doctrine of eternal life that which he knew the inhabitants of the East preferred before every other earthly enjoyment; and every impostor lays hold of the most fascinating or the most terrific means to seduce the senses of his followers. The gloomy Christian doctrine, which was compiled by the early monks and priests, is that which is calculated to make men give up to those lazy vagabonds all the bounties of nature, and the benefits and enjoyments which this life affords them, under the promise of a reward in the next. Mahometanism is certainly an improvement on this, for the benefit of mankind.

Exhilarating as our prospects are, it behoves us to redouble our efforts. When dismay once seizes an enemy, the victor should not linger. The language and conversation throughout the society of the labouring classes in England, on matters of politics, of religion, of resistance, and of the propriety and means of effecting their emancipation, are such as a few years since would have formed subject matter for every informer, and have subjected the parties to trial for conspiracy, sedition, or treason. But such is the irresistible effect of public opinion, that he who now attempts to support the measures of the present government, is universally set down as a dishonest man. And justly so, for no disinterested man with a sane mind can possibly open his mouth in their behalf. If we trace back the progress we have made within the last three years, in spite of dungeoning and gagging acts of parliament;

in spite of *Ex-Officio* informations; in spite of the chains lately put on the press, we must, ourselves, feel astonished. We may fairly, and without presumption say, that we have all the labouring classes with us, a great portion of the middle class, the other portion now coming over. In fact, if we take a candid survey, we shall find few left behind but those who calculate on a momentary gain by it, and in whose countenances a continual alarm is visible. A government, however vicious, will always find a support and protection in proportion to the vicious disposition of the people over whom it reigns. Thus it is in England at this moment. Those who dread punishment for past offences, those who live by public plunder, those who live in idleness, by preaching lies and falsehood, all shrink from the investigation of a revolution in the affairs of the country; and with all their might, study to support things as they are, preferring a common vortex of destruction, to a future life of public scorn and detestation. Liberal and beneficial principles never retrograde in a fixed state of society; they are to be blasted only where an extermination of a society is effected by an illiterate and barbarous army. On this ground we have nothing to fear. If ever measures are carried to such an extent as to bring on a civil war in earnest in this country, in consequence of the demand of a reformation in the political system, the people have all to gain and nothing to fear. A dissemination of liberal principles is fast spreading over the face of this country: it will be a war of intellect whenever or if ever it does occur: we shall only find opposed to us the most corrupt, the most vicious, and that portion of society, which is to be hired for every vile purpose, and will no longer oppose themselves to us when they can gain more by joining us.

There is one evil which our present degraded state as a nation entails upon us, and that is, that as fast as the middle classes, (the farmer with a small capital, and the tradesman who is not ruined,) get their eyes opened to their real condition and prospects, they perceive immediately the necessity of removing to another country; and every farmer or tradesman so leaving, adds to the burthen of those who are left; because he throws off his share of the taxes and the poor-rates, and the portion is added to those who remain; so that the approach to pauperism daily increases, and its means of support daily decreases. Thus we proceed in a gradual, evident, and perceptible decay. Our present rulers show a disposition to pursue the same measures, whilst they can

find income enough to cover their own salaries, and the pay of the army. It is a common character with the soldiers to adhere whilst he obtains his pay, but should the moment arrive when the pay of the army falls into arrear, then the game will speedily be over. It appears to have been the arrear of pay that has created so extensive a revolt in the Spanish army, connected with the intention of sending them to South America, where their pay would not be long wanted. As sparks of fire are calculated to kindle a general flame, so let us hope that this incident will communicate with the combustible matter of France, and the rest of Europe. There is a talk of placing an army of 20,000 Frenchmen, under the command of the Duke *De Angouleme*, on the Spanish frontier! We are well acquainted with what became of the last army the Duke commanded in the South of France. Any attempt on the part of France to interfere with the Spanish insurrection, would be like putting a match to the mine that is sprung under its own monarchy. France is now in the most agitated state, in consequence of an attempt to abridge the representative system. He vainly hopes thereby to lessen the influence of what is called the liberal party, as the title of a republican party is rather too harsh for the ears of hereditary and legitimate monarchy. But it is well known that the republican party is as three to one throughout France, and Louis bids fair to close the Bourbon reign there. France will not again have to encounter the combined despots of the North, assisted by British gold. Britain could not interfere, nor scarcely preserve her present condition on such an occasion. It was the brilliant progress of the republican arms of France that became fatal to the Republic itself; it laid the foundation of that military empire of Bonaparte, which otherwise would never have existed, and France would have remained a Republic, one and indivisible, to this day. However, in succession to the revolution of America, it has furnished a grand and brilliant example to the rest of Europe, on whom it appears likely at present, that it will not be entirely lost.

There appears a strange apathy in the Spanish insurrection, which is so strikingly indicative of the Spanish character, and shews that they are totally devoid of the true **REPUBLICAN FIRE**. A month has been suffered to elapse and scarcely a movement made. We must admit that we have no correct information of the number of the patriots, but celerity is the life of revolution. A similar body of French-

men would have performed wonders ere this, were they in a similar situation. Opposition to them on the part of the Royalists is equally inert, and cannot be accounted for, but by the disaffection of the whole Spanish army. It becomes excessively painful to free spirits of other parts of Europe, to be waiting day after day in the most breathless anxiety to hear of further movements in Spain. I crave my newspapers with all the eager expectation the human mind can display, and day after day am equally disappointed. I have no intelligence since the 21st ult. but cannot believe it possible that things can long remain in that state. The defection of Cadiz to the royal cause would decide the fate of Spain. Its last effort seems to have been concentrated there for the purpose of supporting its standard in a corner of South America. Poor, imbecile despot! Ferdinand should set all his priests, monks, and nuns to pray for him. Surely the Lord of Hosts, the God of Armies, will not be deaf to this favourite and devotee. Cannot the Virgin intercede for her embroiderer? What is become of all the miracle-working saints? Are they also asleep? Oh! comfortless religion! That crafty fellow SATAN appears to be master in Spain. Every Christian in Europe should pray for his most Catholic Majesty; their cause is strictly dependant on each other. Surely this fighting God of the Jews and Christians is not capable of protecting them in the hour of danger. Of late he has been particularly negligent of his sovereign representatives on earth. The "Lord's Anointed" can no longer impose an awe on the multitude, who are becoming daily better informed. Let us draw from this inference that the supreme and controuling power of nature does not protect the crowned and mitred villain. The bounties and dispensations of this supreme power are alike open to all men. It matters nothing in what name we appeal to it, or whether we confine ourselves to any particular appellation; suffice it, that we neither misrepresent nor abuse its attributes. But when we see notoriously wicked men claim to be its representatives and the dispensers of its benefits, it naturally excites the indignation of every honest mind, because we know that there are at all times those who are credulous and easily imposed upon. Before the close of this article, it may be necessary to observe, that in speaking of the Jewish or Christian Deity, we have not the most distant allusion to any being, spiritual or material. We look at him with the same mind as we do the Saturn, the Jupiter, the Mars, the Apollo, the

Bacchus, the Hercules, or any of the Gods of the Pantheon. The whole account that we have of him from the Jews or even the Christians, is in great measure borrowed from the relations of these several deities. If this be an error, it is an error of the mind, which after the most minute research, and mature deliberation, is not ashamed to avow the result of its examination. It might be said, why give this offence to those who believe in and worship such gods? My answer is, that the mind that dares to be honest will always study to expose what it conceives to be erroneous. This conduct is sanctioned throughout the books called the Old and New Testament. We there find every new sect endeavouring to put down what they conceived to be the errors and false gods of other existing sects, and there is not a question, but what each succeeding sect have been actuated by similar impulses and motives, down to the present time. My wish and anxiety is to abolish the worship of every formal god, the better to elevate the mind to the God of Nature. To give him form, to give him a portion of space to inhabit, to pretend to communicate with him either bodily or spiritually, appears to me to be that mode of action by which the Christian expresses blasphemy in his own acceptance of the word. Crude as the notion of the Deity evidently was among the Greek and Roman philosophers, yet they never defamed him in the manner that the Jew and Christian have done. Their contemplations of him, at least, were respectful, they neither avowed a confirmed knowledge of him, nor any communication with him. It has been reserved for those who call themselves Jewish and Christian philosophers, to place a spiritual being in a ridiculous point of view: to make him subservient to all their vague imaginations. Reader, whoever thou art, think not that I am disposed to treat this subject with levity—mistake not the general clamour of the day for my intention. I hope yet to live to shew that he worships the Deity in the purest spirit, who studies to rescue his name from any further defamation.

R. CARLILE.

Dorchester Gaol,

Feb. 15, 1820.

TO MR. CARLILE.

Hackney, 9th February, 1820.

SIR,

If the following should tend to amuse one of the solitary moments imposed on you by the iron hand of oppression, I should feel gratified; and if you think it, either in this shape or any other, worthy a place in the *Republican*, it would please me to observe it there. Your unqualified approver,

A SCEPTIC.

A Christian and believer in the doctrine of election or predestination, asserted his belief before me that the elect only can be saved; and that the rest of mankind, whether Christians or otherwise, must be damned; that is to say, condemned to everlasting misery: this opinion he founds on the Bible. Being questioned as to the probable proportion of elect to the whole body of Christians, he confessed his charitable belief that *one in fifty* might be predestined to salvation.

Assuming the population of the world to be 1,000,000,000, and that there are 150,000,000 of professed Christians, there will remain 850,000,000 of Infidels, whether Jews, Pagans, Mahometans, &c. &c. &c. This number, if multiplied by 66, (the number of generations since the birth of Jesus,) will amount to 46,750,000,000, a prodigious multitude! who, having died out of the pale of "Holy Mother Church," are inevitably damned! while all the Christians of every denomination that have lived and died, even assuming their number to have always been equal to its present amount, cannot have exceeded 8,250,000,000; and if our predestinarian be correct, one fiftieth part only of this number should be allowed; making the number of souls elected to be saved, from the commencement of the Christian era to the present time, 165,000,000.

In the same period there must have been damned:—

Heathens	-	-	-	-	46,750,000,000
Lost (not being chosen) Christians					8,085,000,000

Making a grand total of - - 54,835,000,000

Or about 322 times as many formed for everlasting misery, as there are for eternal happiness.

Surely this must stagger even the most credulous! and shock the nerves of all but those hardy divines who have fearlessly declared "there are infants in hell not a span long." To this some may answer, that doubtless those who die before they arrive at the age to judge for themselves, who die before they have sinned (forgetting the doctrine of original sin) will be taken to Heaven; or that those nations who never heard the sound of the "blessed gospel," will not be dealt with like those who have, and who reject it.—But if either of those propositions be admitted, I imagine it subverts the very foundations of Christianity, since, if any can be rescued from the power of the Devil, otherways than by a belief in its founder, then it follows the Gospel must be a curse rather than a blessing to mankind; as had it never been heard of, *none could have rejected it*, and consequently we must conclude all would have been dealt with alike, and that favourably. From this I see nought but the option of two beliefs, either that of the MONSTROUS PROPOSITION that *fifty-four thousand eight hundred and thirty-five millions* of our fellow creatures have gone to that terrific place, the Christian hell; and only *one hundred and sixty-five millions* have been saved and are happy: or, that the Gospel, *to say the best of it*, is needless.

Can any of your Correspondents inform me of the supposed number of the human race that have existed on this earth prior to Jesus; and who are I conceive to be added to the number of damned, always excepting the *holy, moral, and beneficent Jews!*

TO MR. R. CARLILE.

SIR,

PERMIT a stranger to express to you his high satisfaction, not alone on occasion of your able defence on the extravagant trial, but also congratulating you on the assembling at the Mansion-house of the holy Apostolic band, upon a last crusade. You see it is the clever Bible Society which I allude to: their glimmering lamp of the "faith" at the eve of gliding into darkness visible, seems wanting a portion of oil before departure, which you may cheerfully allow them, whilst your cause couches on the rock of truth, invincibility, nay of immortality. A change there will happen, soon or

late, in religious worship and purity of adoration of that awful Being, which has supremely revealed itself by the works daily under our eyes. I speak not only of the religious phenomena here, but what there is, or rather has been going on, particularly in Protestant Germany, these 60 or 70 years past; where the freedom of the Press (will it be admitted by Englishmen jealous of emulation abroad) was far more extensive (before some latter symptoms there) than here in Biblical researches, particularly orientalists, antiquarians of erudite learning, professors at the universities, true theologians, cherished by their flock, have been brooding over the Old and New Testament, and what has been their unanimous result, (this Exigesis as it is termed) but to unmask, almost without our reflections or additional arguments, the "Pudenda" of that incongruent collection of books. Their works and names, however, are known among the lettered and critics here, mostly all translated to an half dozen. The Duke of Grafton was at the expence of some thousands to have translated for his private use the works of Griesbach, from apprehension of danger of publishing them here. Now it is known, that in all ages, even the darkest, some one or other arose and declaimed against this blindness of mankind, either openly or in a whispering manner, and thousands, I should think, suppressed their doubts against an overwhelming prevalence of superstition, whose essence it is never to examine (although Akbar, Emperor of Hindostan, was wont to say, how he wondered that superstitious creeds could be transmitted from generation to generation, from father to son, without once putting them to the test, or examining them; this he first expressed when he had learned the Christian creed from the Portuguese on their first settlement in the East). Another Emperor, among our Christians, Frederick, a very crusader to the sacred land, drops the words; "*Tres sunt prestigiatore, Moses, Christus, Mohamed, uti mundo dominarentur totum populum sibi contemporaneum, seduxisse,*" such as it seems to have been testified by the Landgrave of Hesse then, to have heard it from his mouth with the addition "*si principes Imperii institutione meæ adhærerent, ego multo meliorem modum credendi, et vivendi ordinarem.*" The Pope, however, got wind of the profane words, and roughly handled him, obliging him to recant the same. Indeed what could be otherwise thought by a mind who was studying the works of antiquity, and was familiar with the works of Aristotle,

(not then disfigured,) of Plato, and Xenophon, as is recorded of him. Such a man when he came in the East, would set to profit his attainments before any of the other leaders of these armies of the faithful. And, by the by, falling upon the remark of an imbecile of the Bible Company, who expressed high wondering at the rapid spreading of Christianity, and its manner by poor mechanics, his taking it as a proof of divine interference: on my part I view the whole history of the human race in no other light than a libel on the human race; a series of extravagancies, whether religious or political. Insanity takes the lead throughout their history; the *nil admirari* is here justified; beside that, the wonderer controverts himself, as nothing was more easy, at the character of that age, and credulous minds on the spreading of Greek philosophy, distorted by half or well understood, the daemons of Socrates and Plato, half gods, engendering the Gnostics, that the lower classes, left to themselves in Judea under the government of the Romans, should have been coming to embrace the new sect which was negative in its doctrine, enjoining nothing except Baptism in the Jordan, but only to abstain from a strict adherence to the rigorous law of Moses; and the heathen from sacrificing, worshipping their gods; those latter meanwhile had already sunk into contempt generally, as it seems by the currency of Greek authors. It is indeed astonishing that nothing should have come to the ears of the Greeks nor Romans concerning such astounding miracles: it was an age of reasoning and observation: there were learned seats at Antiochia, Alexandria, Athens, and Rhodes. The Jews at Jerusalem themselves could not have overlooked these amazing deeds. And what shall be held of that foolish exorcism, which the fanatics themselves pass over in silence; Jesus himself practises as exorcist; is this a proof of his divine portion? The governing powers would give him no credit, but only the mob; the former regarded his equivocal manner of talking of two kingdoms, as if he were occasionally setting upon sovereign power, as we saw Bonaparte, who also spoke in the beginning of a popular kingdom. On supposing the whole to be no fiction, will our Governments believe, supposing the exact cases and men, but suffering that they might present themselves among the inferior ranks? Here indeed we meet with the "Brothers" and the "Southcotes" in these very days; and if they had not been stopped in their career, we should have had plenty of mira-

cles, with which they had already began sporting. In an age that could breed such productions as the Apocalypse, every frenzy might be acting; and there were more Apocalypses, it is said, than that of John. Paul the Apostle, as described, must have been a fiery lunatic. The Roman Governor Festus exclaimed, "Paul, too much learning hath made thee mad." Well spoken. The noted Munchausen was in common life a civil, well-behaved gentleman; but when he fell upon his "string" insensibly, he fell into extravagant stories and anecdotes, which in their beginning appeared not improbable; but in the mode he proceeded, and the suavity of elocution first credited, he sunk lastly into palpable lies, which, it was visible he earnestly *believed himself*; for I have known him in my early youth personally, yet had not the most remote interest of acting in that manner, but that it was a propensity natural to him. Had he been a devotee, a religious fanatic, a leader, he would have made multitudes of converts with rapid progress. Man's mind is a labyrinth unparalleled. He belonged to the first nobility of Hanover, renowned in Germany for high pride; but his family or relatives abandoned him, on account of his frantic conduct. No less is the miracle striking: one of the Centurions has his daughter dead, but raised; would not this Centurion have published such a deed to his relations at least?

Pardon me, Sir, a fervour for truth leads me to carry "coals to Newcastle." You may have perceived that I am no Englishman. Indeed, I may fairly apologize for my freedom, whilst having received an order *from abroad for five copies of your trials*, whenever they might be published. I am a native German, retired from mercantile business, residing here since the year 1788, and an humble superficial friend of the sciences; nevertheless, I have employed myself deeply inquiring in subjects of this nature, to a full conviction, and I cannot but smile at the "floodgates" of the Chief Justice; these floodgates have been flowing undisturbed in Germany these sixty years past. There an edition of the Gospels was published by the German dramatist (Lessing) known here sufficiently by lettered critics, as an acute observer, reasoner, and erudite; it detects the frauds and impositions of these crude unsatisfactory compositions, that bear no comparison in the exposition of morals to the works of Mark Aurel, and Epithet. Since the floodgates have been opened, the Protestant Pastors (quite a different

sort of men in their duties to what is seen of the English clergy) never touch the mysticism of the Gospels, but take occasion of the incident or moral precepts. They admire, and the learned smile, that here in this supreme land, there should be actions brought before a court for publishing "The Age of Reason," or similar productions. But the most surprising injustice is, that whilst other authors' investigations on the Bible are circulating, those should be left unnoticed; it strikes "*prima facie*."

I shall wait to the end of the publishing of your Trial before sending away, since I perceive there is a prosecution against your lady for selling.

Nov. 16th, 1819.

ANONYMOUS.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All communications for the Republican are requested to be addressed to the Editor, at 55, Fleet Street.

The Editor has to acknowledge the Author's favour of a pamphlet, entitled "An Attempt to remove the prejudices entertained by some of the Friends of Liberty against Christianity; in which it is proved that the true spirit of Liberty is necessarily and essentially associated with genuine Christianity." Dated Liverpool. In reply, he begs to remind the Author, that his defence and recommendation of Christianity is in the same spirit, and upon the same ground that Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Canning, and Mr. Wilberforce, approve and applaud the British Constitution: they describe it as every thing but what it is in reality.

Friend Grimshaw's pamphlet has reached us, but without any communication or direction; therefore we can pay very little attention to it. We wish to give one general recommendation to all defenders of the Christian religion: it is, that they should learn to defend their religion without the assistance of the fable on which it is founded. It cannot be deemed a defence or disputation, where the grounds of dispute are first insisted on as infallible. We hope Friend Grimshaw finds the motion of the Spirit in the Society of Friends more agreeable to him than when he was a member of the "Corresponding Society." It appears to us that he became a member of the "Corresponding Society" more from whim and caprice, than from any fixed principle or idea of the necessity of civil and religious liberty. There have been but few apostates amongst its members from the principles of that Society.

VICE *versus* REASON.

Mrs. Carlile has published a Copy of the Information now pending against her for publishing a Report of her husband's Trial, agreeable to his directions. Price 3d. We would warn those gentry of the Vice Society to beware, lest from their zeal to persecute they do not overstep the bounds of prudence, and open again what they call the "flood-gates of Infidelity." It is notorious that a Rev. Bishop, who is at the head of this Society, and far advanced in years, keeps a concubine in the face of all his servants, at his principal residence in one of the squares in town. Although a Bishop, we should not condemn this, was he not an active member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice!!!

TO MR. CARLILE.

November 12th, 1819.

MUCH INJURED SIR,

PERMIT me as one of your warmest admirers in the cause of deism, justice, and truth, and in which you have so meritoriously elevated yourself above the level of mankind, to submit to your consideration the following outline of the immortality of the *soul*, and a *future state*, as drawn from the principles of the Law of Nature, by way of question and answer, with a design to inculcate the only true and natural system of religion, viz. *Deism*: and if on perusal should be found worthy your approbation, to be inserted in the Republican; and in so doing I remain,

Your's devotedly,

No. 11, Great Smith St.
Westminster.

JOHN WILLS.

Q. What does the Law of Nature testify of man being endowed with a soul?

A. It is certain that there is something in man which guides and rules him in all his actions, which animates and raises him above the brute.

Q. Does the Law of Nature afford any evidence of the immortality of that soul?

A. Yes, most certainly.

The prospects of a future state is the secret comfort and refreshment of the mind, it doubles all our pleasures, and supplies us under affliction with hopes fixed on eternity, we may with composure meet disappointment, misfortune, pain, sickness, the loss of our nearest relation, or even death itself. If in this hope we err, it is an error sweet and lucrative, since it affords an healing balm to the stings of adversity, and teaches us more strongly to rule our conduct by the Laws that Nature prescribes!

Q. What are the evidences the Laws of Nature affords of it?

A. Amongst many others are,—First, From the nature of the Creator, whose wisdom is manifest in every thing we behold,—from which it is unreasonable to suppose that he made man to drop into nothing almost as soon as created. Secondly, By the satisfaction felt in the practice of virtue, and the uneasiness attending the commission of vice. Thirdly, That it is inconsistent that the

great governor of the creation, who by annual miracle restores the perished year, and gives fresh youth and beauty, should leave man to be alone the scorn of time and sport of death; suffering him to see only one spring, one summer, one autumn, and then to winter irredeemable, be doomed, cast out, and despised. Fourthly, From the increasing appetite the mind has to knowledge, and the extending its own faculty; also to duration itself, as we are always hurrying over the present part of our existence to arrive at certain little settlements, or imaginary points of rest. Having arrived, we mark out fresh ones, press forward with the like eagerness, and all cease to be, as soon as obtained. This is plainly every man's condition, and as our time wears away, our appetite to something future remains. Now since the author of our being does nothing in vain, and planted in us no desire which has not its object, futurity is the proper object of the passion so constantly sought after; and this restlessness in the present, this assigning ourselves over to form their stages of duration, this successive grasping at something still to come, is a kind of instinct or natural symptom, which the mind of man has of its own immortality.

Q. Did you not say prayer was not required by the Law of Nature?

A. When prayer is well used it is not in vain; it keeps up a dependence on Deity in the minds of the people, and so may be a means to help to subdue the mind to virtue, and submission to the laws of Nature;—in affliction it may give ease to the mind to vent our griefs in cries and tears;—in affluence it may have a tendency to keep the mind from being too lofty. When by prayer men are exhorted to just and proper action, or to make use of right and proper means to obtain what they desire or pray for, without any expectation, merely by prayer, it becomes us to be thankful for favors received! We ought not to expect to change God's mind, but exert our own.

Q. If the Creator has wrought with his own hand such ever-existing and unchangeable Laws, whence have arose the various systems of Religion which at present disgrace humanity?

A. Superstition and enthusiasm have been the root of them all. The mind of man is subject to certain unaccountable terrors, proceeding from the unhappy situation of affairs, from ill health, from a gloomy and melancholy disposition. In such a state of mind, infinite unknown evils are dreaded from unknown agents, and so the mind of man finds imaginary objects of terror, to whose power it sets no limits; of course these invincible enemies must have some unaccountable methods to appease them; recourse is had to ceremonies, observances, sacrifices, presents, &c. so that weakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance, are the true resources of superstition. On the other hand, the mind of man is subject to prodigious elevation and presumption, arising from prosperous success, luxuriant health, strong spirits, or from

a bold and confident disposition. Then every thing mortal vanishes, as unworthy attention, and a full range is given to fancy in the invisible regions or world of spirits, and it is at liberty to indulge itself in every imaginary notion which may best suit its present taste and disposition; from thence arise raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy; confidence and presumption still increasing them, and seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of the Divine Being, who is the object of devotion. In a little time the inspired person begins to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the Divinity. Hope, pride, presumption, and a warm imagination follows in its train, together with ignorance. These are the true sources of enthusiasm, which when once established, prejudice and education renders them firm. To make these believed the better, they add the working of miracles, as if the Creator delighted in disordering his own works; for we know that every thing in the universe is connected by a chain that nothing can destroy; we know that God himself being immutable, his laws are so likewise, and that it is impossible for a single wheel of the great machine to be stopped, without all nature being disordered. If the Eternal Being, who has foreseen and arranged every thing, and who governs the world by invariable laws, acts contrary to himself by overturning those laws, this can only be for the sake of benefitting all nature. But it seems contradictory to suppose any case in which the Great Creator and Disposer can change the order of the world for its good. For we must acknowledge that he could foresee any thing that would be wanting; and if he has foreseen it, he has ordered it from the beginning; and if he has not foreseen it, *he is no longer God.*

I must acknowledge I am indebted to you; henceforth I shall regard all sects of religion as mere human inventions, but regulate my conduct by Nature's all-sufficient, invariable laws.

It is evident that the only word of God is the creation, in which we may unceasingly read; and to arrive at a proper knowledge of the Deity is to study the system of the universe. For what an august, what an amazing conception (if human imagination can conceive it) does it afford of the works of the Creator! Thousands and tens of thousands of suns multiplied without end, and ranged all around us at immense distances from each other, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, all in rapid motion, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, invariably keeping the paths prescribed them; and these worlds, peopled with myriads of intelligent beings, formed for endless progression, in perfection and felicity. If so much goodness, power, wisdom, and magnificence is displayed in the material creation, which is the least considerable part of the universe, what unconceivable ideas are we led to entertain of him who governs the whole!

TO THE READERS OF THE REPUBLICAN.

BEFORE I occupy so great a portion of *The Republican* with the 15th and 16th chapters of "GIBBON'S DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE," as I wish and intend to do, it may be necessary to show some cause for it. It has been currently reported for some time past, that it was the intention of certain booksellers in London, to publish an edition of this work with the omission of those two chapters, which have been an eye-sore to professing Christians, in consequence of proceeding from the pen of so accomplished a man as Mr. Gibbon. They have been attacked in the most virulent manner by the late Dr. Warburton, and several other priests, but they stand as a rock unshaken, displaying the cause of the origin and progress of the Christian religion,—the characters and manners of the early Christians. Mr. Gibbon has drawn a most impartial sketch, from the most authentic sources. Although in principle he was a decided infidel to the divinity of the Christian religion, the unwary reader might almost imagine that he had set out with a defence of it. There is a mixture of false respect visible in several parts of it; but taken as a whole, it is one of the severest blows Christianity has received from the pen of a single individual. I neither look on Mr. Gibbon nor Mr. Hume as standards of infidelity to the Christian religion; there are others more deserving of that *honourable appellation*, whose objects were more avowed. Paine has attacked the superstitious part of Christianity with more candour than even Voltaire himself; and there is not a question but his "*Age of Reason*" will be the main-spring of the retrograde of Christianity in England and America. France received her impulse perhaps more from the writings of Voltaire than all the others who are called Infidel Philosophers: they were written in a stile better adapted to the French nation than any other works extant. Mr. Gibbon and Mr. Hume both held places under the English Government, and places of some trust and importance, although they might have found around them in similar situations, and even higher in offices, persons of the same principle; yet the rules and regulations for the religion of the uneducated and operative classes, required from them an exterior appearance of respect for the

religion of the law. When the late Lord Stanhope was a Member of the Cabinet, he said he found all the other Members to be Atheists, and himself the only Christian amongst them. When the debate took place in the Cabinet, on the proposed prosecution of Williams, for publishing the "Age of Reason," there was a strong opposition to it, particularly by *Sir David Dundas*. There was a visible and evident reluctance to bring on my trial. It might as well have been brought on the 1st of June as the middle of October; the delay of this time was entirely on the part of the Government. The priests began to be uneasy, and applications were made to the then Attorney General to know whether he had dropped his intention of proceeding. Educated men know by their own sentiments that these are ticklish subjects to meddle with and oppose; and when that a man once sees cause to doubt the superstitions that are attempted to be imposed on him, he seldom shews a disposition to return to them.

I have made these few observations for the purpose of placing Mr. Gibbon's causes of the growth of Christianity in their proper light, and that no individual should mistake the object of their being inserted here. It is the best answer that can be given to those who appeal to the early Christians and the rapid progress of Christianity for the proofs of its divinity. Having answered so many pretended evidences of Christianity, I do not think proper to notice any more of them which shall lead to a repetition of the same matter. I shall publish weekly sixteen pages of these two chapters until they are completed; and they will enable every reader of the *Republican* to take up the cudgels against the alledged early proofs of the divinity of any portion of the Christian religion. There is not a doubt but many of the readers of the *Republican* have read this work of Mr. Gibbon's; but they will have the goodness to recollect, that those publications are addressed to, and chiefly intended for, those who have not. I wish the Deist to adopt in reality, what every Christian professes—the means of setting forth and defending the faith that is in him.

R. CARLILE.

CHAP. XV.

THE

PROGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
AND THE SENTIMENTS, MANNERS, NUMBERS, AND CONDITION
OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

Importance of the Inquiry.—A CANDID but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire. While the great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and, by the means of their colonies, has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

Its difficulties.—But this inquiry, however useful or entertaining, is attended with two peculiar difficulties. The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church. The great law of impartiality too often obliges us to reveal the imperfections of the uninspired teachers and believers of the gospel; and, to a careless observer, *their* faults may seem to cast a shade on the faith which they professed: but the scandal of the pious Christian, and the fallacious triumph of the infidel, should cease as soon as they recollect not only *by whom*, but likewise *to whom*, the divine revelation was given. The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.

Five causes of the growth of Christianity.—Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian

faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned,—that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose,—we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church? It will, perhaps, appear, that it was most effectually favoured and assisted by the five following causes:—1. The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit, which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.—2. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.—3. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church.—4. The pure and austere morals of the Christians.—5. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independant and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

THE FIRST CAUSE. *Zeal of the Jews.*—1. We have already described the religious harmony of the ancient world, and the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other's superstitions. A single people refused to join in the common intercourse of mankind. The Jews, who, under the Assyrian and Persian monarchies, had languished for many ages the most despised portion of their slaves*, emerged from obscurity under the successors of Alexander; and as they multiplied to a surprising degree in the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations†. The sullen obstinacy with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners seemed to mark them out a distinct species of men,

* *Dum Assyrios penes, Medosque, et Persas Oriens fuet, de spectissima pars servientium.* Tacit. Hist. v. 8. Herodotus, who visited Asia whilst it obeyed the last of those empires, slightly mentions the Syrians of Palestine, who, according to their own confessions, had received from Egypt the right of circumcision. See l. ii. c. 104.

† Diodorus Siculus, l. xl. Dion. Cassius, l. xxxvii. p. 121. Tacit. Hist. v. 1—9. Justin. xxxvi. 2, 3.

who boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their implacable hatred to the rest of human-kind *. Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks †. According to the maxims of universal toleration, the Romans protected a superstition which they despised.‡ The polite Augustus condescended to give orders, that sacrifices should be offered for his prosperity in the Temple of Jerusalem §; while the meanest of the posterity of Abraham, who should have paid the same homage to the Jupiter of the Capitol, would have been an object of abhorrence to himself and to his brethren. But the moderation of the conquerors was insufficient to appease the jealous prejudices of their subjects, who were alarmed and scandalized at the ensigns of Paganism, which necessarily introduced themselves into a Roman province ||. The mad attempt of Caligula to place his own statue in the Temple of Jerusalem was defeated by the unanimous resolution of a people who dreaded death much less than such an idolatrous profanation ¶. Their attachment to the law of Moses was equal to their detestation of foreign religions. The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.

Its gradual Increase.—This inflexible perseverance, which appeared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient world, as-

* Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses,
Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,
Quæsitos ad fontes solos deducere verpas.

The letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses. But the wise, the humane Maimonides openly teaches, that if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death. See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 28.

† A Jewish sect, which indulged themselves in a sort of occasional conformity, derived from Herod, by whose example and authority they had been seduced, the name of Herodians. But their numbers were so inconsiderable, and their duration so short, that Josephus has not thought them worthy of his notice. See Prideaux's *Connection*, vol. ii. p. 285.

‡ Cicero, *pro Flacco*, c. 28.

§ Philo de Legatione. Augustus left a foundation for a perpetual sacrifice. Yet he approved of the neglect which his grandson Caius expressed towards the Temple of Jerusalem. See Sueton. in *August.* c. 93, and Casaubon's notes on that passage.

|| See, in particular, Joseph. *Antiquitat.* xvii. 6, xviii. 3, and de *Bol. Judaic.* i. 33, and ii. 9. Edit. Havercamp.

¶ Jussi a Caio Cesare effigiem ejus in templo locare arma potius sumpser. Tacit *Hist.* v. 9. Philo and Josephus gave a very circumstantial, but a very rhetorical, account of this transaction, which exceedingly perplexed the governor of Syria. At the first mention of this idolatrous proposal, King Agrippa fainted away, and did not recover his senses till the third day.

sumes a more awful character, since Providence has deigned to reveal to us the mysterious history of the chosen people. But the devout and even scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so conspicuous among the Jews who lived under the second temple, becomes still more surprising if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity of their forefathers. When the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai—when the tides of the ocean, and the course of the planets were suspended for the convenience of the Israelites; and when temporal rewards and punishments were the immediate consequences of their piety or disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Divine King, placed the idols of the nations in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fantastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia *. As the protection of Heaven was deservedly withdrawn from the ungrateful race, their faith acquired a proportionable degree of vigour and purity. The contemporaries of Moses and Joshua had beheld with careless indifference the most amazing miracles. Under the pressure of every calamity, the belief of those miracles has preserved the Jews of a later period from the universal contagion of idolatry; and in contradiction to every known principle of the human mind, that singular people seems to have yielded a stronger and more ready assent to the traditions of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence of their own senses †

Their Religion better suited to defence than to conquest.—

The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for defence, but it was never designed for conquest; and it seems probable that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The divine promises were originally made, and the distinguishing rite of circumcision was enjoined, to a single family. When the posterity of Abraham had multiplied like the sands of the sea, the Deity, from whose mouth they received a system of laws and ceremonies, declared himself the proper, and as it were the national, God of Israel; and with the most jealous care separated his favourite people from the rest of mankind. The conquest of the land of Canaan was accompanied with so many

* For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may be observed, that Milton has comprised in one hundred and thirty very beautiful lines the two large and learned syntagmas, which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject.

† “How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewn among them?” (Numbers xiv. 11). It would be easy, but it would be unbecoming, to justify the complaint of the Deity from the whole tenor of the Mosaic history.

wonderful, and with so many bloody circumstances, that the victorious Jews were left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with all their neighbours. They had been commanded to extirpate some of the most idolatrous tribes, and the execution of the divine will had seldom been retarded by the weakness of humanity. With the other nations they were forbidden to contract any marriages or alliances; and the prohibition of receiving them into the congregation, which in some cases was perpetual, almost always extended to the third, to the seventh, or even to the tenth, generation. The obligation of preaching to the Gentiles the faith of Moses, had never been inculcated as a precept of the law, nor were the Jews inclined to impose it on themselves as a voluntary duty. In the admission of new citizens, that unsocial people was actuated by the selfish vanity of the Greeks, rather than by the generous policy of Rome. The descendants of Abraham were flattered by the opinion, that they alone were the heirs of the covenant, and they were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance, by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the earth. A larger acquaintance with mankind extended their knowledge without correcting their prejudices; and whenever the God of Israel acquired any new votaries, he was much more indebted to the inconstant humour of polytheism than to the active zeal of his own missionaries*. The religion of Moses seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as for a single nation; and if a strict obedience had been paid to the order, that every male, three times in the year, should present himself before the Lord Jehovah, it would have been impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the promised land.† That obstacle was indeed removed by the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem; but the most considerable part of the Jewish religion was involved in its destruction; and the Pagans, who had long wondered at the strange report of an empty sanctuary‡, were at a loss to discover what could be the object, or what could be the instruments of a worship which

* All that relates to the Jewish proselytes has been very ably treated by Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, i. vi. c. 6, 7.

† See Exod. xxiv. 23, Deut. xvi. 16, the commentators, and a very sensible note in the *Universal History*, vol. i. p. 603, edit. fol.

‡ When Pompey, using or abusing the right of conquest, entered into the holy of holies, it was observed, with amazement, "*Nulla intus Deum effigie, vacuum sedem et inania arcana.*" Tacit. *Hist.* v. 9. It was a popular saying, with regard to the Jews,—

Nil præter nubes et cæli numen adorant.

was destitute of temples and of altars, of priests and of sacrifices. Yet, even in their fallen state, the Jews, still asserting their lofty and exclusive privileges, shunned, instead of courting, the society of strangers. They still insisted, with inflexible rigour, on those parts of the law which it was in their power to practise. Their peculiar distinctions of days, of meats, and a variety of trivial, though burdensome, observances, were so many objects of disgust and aversion for the other nations, to whose habits and prejudices they were diametrically opposite. The painful, and even dangerous rite of circumcision, was alone capable of repelling a willing proselyte from the door of the synagogue*.

More liberal zeal of Christianity.—Under these circumstances, Christianity offered itself to the world, armed with the strength of the Mosaic law, and delivered from the weight of its fetters. An exclusive zeal for the truth of religion, and the unity of God, was as carefully inculcated in the new as in the ancient system: and whatever was now revealed to mankind, concerning the nature and designs of the Supreme Being, was fitted to increase their reverence for that mysterious doctrine. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity. From the beginning of the world, an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long expected coming of the Messiah, who, in compliance with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, had been more frequently represented under the character of a king and conqueror, than under that of a prophet, a martyr, and the Son of God. By his expiatory sacrifice, the imperfect sacrifices of the temple were at once consummated and abolished. The ceremonial law, which consisted only of types and figures, was succeeded by a pure and spiritual worship, equally adapted to all climates, as well as to every condition of mankind; and to the initiation of blood, was substituted a more harmless initiation of water. The promise of divine favour, instead of being partially confined to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the Gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret

* A second kind of circumcision was inflicted on a Samaritan or Egyptian proselyte. The sullen indifference of the Talmudists, with respect to the conversation of strangers, may be seen in Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 6.

pride, which under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart, was still reserved for the members of the Christian church; but at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favour, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful Deity.

Obstinacy and reasons of the believing Jews.—The enfranchisement of the church from the bonds of the synagogue was a work, however, of some time and of some difficulty. The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messiah, foretold by their ancient oracles, respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the Gentiles, who continually augmented the number of believers. These Judaising Christians seem to have argued, with some degree of plausibility, from the divine origin of the Mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great Author. They affirmed, *that* if the Being, who is the same through all eternity, had designed to abolish those sacred rites, which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation: *that*, instead of those frequent declarations, which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of the Mosaic religion, it would have been represented as a provisional scheme, intended to last only till the coming of the Messiah, who should instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of faith and of worship: * *that* the Messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law,† would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies, without

* These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and refuted with equal ingenuity and candour by the Christian Limborch. See the *Amica Collatio*, (it well deserves that name) on account of the dispute between them.

† Jesus....circumciscus erat; cibus utebatur Judaicis; vestitu simili; purgatos scabie mittebat ad sacerdotes; Paschata et alios dies festos religiosè observabat: Si quos sanavit Sabatho, ostendit non tantum ex lege, sed et exceptis sententiis talia opera Sabatho non interdicta. Grotius de *veritate Religionis Christianæ*, l. v. c. 7. A little afterwards, (c. 12) he expatiates on the condescension of the apostles.

suffering Christianity to remain, during so many years, obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defence of the expiring cause of the Mosaic law; but the industry of our learned divines has abundantly explained the ambiguous language of the Old Testament, and the ambiguous conduct of the apostolic teachers. It was proper gradually to unfold the system of the gospel, and to pronounce, with the utmost caution and tenderness, a sentence of condemnation so repugnant to the inclinations and prejudices of the believing Jews.

The Nazarene church of Jerusalem.—The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions, and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its sectaries. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ.* It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church which was founded only forty years after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, should be received as the standard of orthodoxy.† The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable parent, and relieved her distresses by a liberal contribution of alms. But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ; and the Gentiles, who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of Mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren, the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple, of the city, and of the

* Pæne omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. See Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 5.

† Mosheim de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum, p. 153. In this masterly performance, which I shall often have occasion to quote, he enters much more fully into the state of the primitive church, than he has an opportunity of doing in his General History.

public religion of the Jews was severely felt by the Nazarenes; as in their manners, though not in their faith, they maintained so intimate a connection with their impious countrymen, whose misfortunes were attributed by the Pagans to the contempt, and more justly ascribed by the Christians to the wrath, of the Supreme Deity. The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan, where that ancient church languished about sixty years in solitude and obscurity.* They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the *holy city*, and the hope of being one day restored to those seats which both nature and religion taught them to love as well as to revere. But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities; and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the rights of victory with unusual rigour. The emperor founded, under the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, a new city on Mount Sion,† to which he gave the privileges of a colony; and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscriptions, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion, the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and privileges, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian and more firmly cemented their union with the Catholic church.‡

The Ebionites.—When the name and honours of the church

* Eusebius, l. iii. c. 5. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 605. During this occasional absence, the Bishop and Church of Pella still retained the title of Jerusalem. In the same manner, the Roman pontiffs resided seventy years at Avignon; and the patriarchs of Alexandria have long since transferred their episcopal seat to Cairo.

† Dion Cassius, l. lxxix. The exile of the Jewish nation from Jerusalem is attested by Aristo of Pella (apud Euseb. l. iv. c. 6.) and is mentioned by several ecclesiastical writers, though some of them too hastily extend this interdiction to the whole country of Palestine.

‡ Eusebius, (l. iv. c. 6.) Sulpitius Severus, ii. 31. By comparing their unsatisfactory accounts, Mosheim (p. 327, &c.) has drawn out a very distinct representation of the circumstances and motives of this revolution.

of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes which refused to accompany their Latin bishop. They still preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the city of Bœrea, or, as it is now called, of Aleppo, in Syria.* The name of Nazarenes was deemed too honourable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received, from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites.† In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy, whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation. The humane temper of Justin Martyr inclined him to answer this question in the affirmative; and though he expressed himself with the most guarded diffidence, he ventured to determine in favour of such an imperfect Christian, if he were content to practise the Mosaic ceremonies, without pretending to assert their general use or necessity. But when Justin was pressed to declare the sentiment of the church, he confessed that there were many among the orthodox Christians, who not only excluded their Judaizing brethren from the hope of salvation, but who declined any intercourse with them in the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life.‡ The more rigorous opinion prevailed, as it was natural to expect, over the milder; and an eternal bar of separation was fixed between the disciples of Moses and those of Christ. The unfortunate Ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided cha-

* Le Clerc (Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477. 535,) seems to have collected from Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and other writers, all the principal circumstances that relate to the Nazarenes or Ebionites. The nature of their opinions soon divided them into a stricter and a milder sect; and there is some reason to conjecture, that the family of Jesus Christ remained members, at least, of the latter and more moderate party.

† Some writers have been pleased to create an Ebion, the imaginary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on the learned Eusebius than on the vehement Tertullian, or the credulous Epiphanius. According to Le Clerc, the Hebrew word *ebjonim* may be translated into Latin by that of *pauperes*. See Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477.

‡ See the very curious dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Tryphon. The conference between them was held at Ephesus, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about twenty years after the return of the church at Pella to Jerusalem. For this date, consult the accurate note of Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. ii. p. 511.

acter; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away either into the church or the synagogue.*

The Gnostics.—While the orthodox church preserved a just medium between excessive veneration and improper contempt for the law of Moses, the various heretics deviated into equal but opposite extremes of error and extravagance. From the acknowledged truth of the Jewish religion, the Ebionites had concluded that it could never be abolished. From its supposed imperfections the Gnostics as hastily inferred that it never was instituted by the wisdom of the Deity. There are some objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets, which too readily present themselves to the sceptical mind; though they can only be derived from our ignorance of remote antiquity, and from our incapacity to form an adequate judgment of the divine economy. These objections were eagerly embraced, and as petulantly urged, by the vain science of the Gnostics.† As those heretics were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the Patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the Seraglio of Solomon. The conquest of the land of Canaan, and the extirpation of the unsuspecting natives, they were at a loss how to reconcile with the common notions of humanity and justice. But when they recollected the sanguinary list of murders, of executions, and of massacres, which stain almost every page of the Jewish annals, they acknowledged that the barbarians of Palestine had exercised as much compassion towards their idolatrous enemies, as they had ever shewn to their friends or countrymen.‡ Passing from the sectaries of the

* Of all the systems of Christianity, that of Abyssinia is the only one which still adheres to the Mosaic rites (Geddes's Church History of Ethiopia, and Dissertations de la Grand sur la Relation du P. Lobo). The eunuch of queen Candace might suggest some suspicions; but as we are assured (Socrates, i. 19. Sozomen, ii. 24. Ludolphus, p. 281) that the Ethiopians were not converted till the fourth century, it is more reasonable to believe that they respected the Sabbath, and distinguished the forbidden meats, in imitation of the Jews, who, in a very early period, were seated on both sides of the Red Sea. Circumcision had been practised by the most ancient Ethiopians from motives of health and cleanliness, which seem to be explained in the *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americaines*, tom. ii. p. 117.

† Beausobre, *Histoire du Manicheisme*, l. i. c. 3, has stated their objections, particularly those of Faustus, the adversary of Augustin, with the most learned impartiality.

‡ Apud ipsos fides obstinata, miserecordia in promptu: adversus omnes alios hostile odium. Tacit. Hist. v. 4. Surely Tacitus had seen the Jews with too favourable an eye. The perusal of Josephus must have destroyed the antithesis.

law to the law itself, they asserted that it was impossible that a religion which consisted only of bloody sacrifices and trifling ceremonies, and whose rewards as well as punishments were all of a carnal and temporal nature, could inspire the love of virtue, or restrain the impetuosity of passion. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was treated with profane derision by the Gnostics, who would not listen with patience to the repose of the Deity after six days labour, to the rib of Adam, the Garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the condemnation pronounced against human kind for the venial offence of their first progenitors.* The God of Israel was impiously represented by the Gnostics, as a being liable to passion and to error, capricious in his favour, implacable in his resentment, meanly jealous in his superstitious worship, and confining his partial providence to a single people, and to this transitory life. In such a character they could discover none of the features of the wise and omnipotent Father of the Universe.† They allowed that the religion of the Jews was somewhat less criminal than the idolatry of the Gentiles; but it was their fundamental doctrine, that the Christ whom they adored as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity, appeared upon earth to rescue mankind from their various errors, and to reveal a *new* system of truth and perfection. The most learned of the fathers, by a very singular condescension, have imprudently admitted the sophistry of the Gnostics. Acknowledging that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation‡.

Their sects, progress, and influence.—It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth, that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ.§ We may observe with much

* Dr. Burnet (*Archæologia*. l. ii. c. 7.) has discussed the first chapter of Genesis with too much wit and freedom.

† The milder Gnostics considered Jehovah, the Creator, as a being of a mixed nature between God and the daemon. Others confounded him with the evil principle. Consult the second century of the general history of Mosheim, which gives a very distinct, though concise account of their strange opinions on this subject.

‡ See Beausobre, *Hist. du Manicheisme*, l. i. c. 4. Origen and St. Augustine were among the allegorists.

§ Hegesippus, ap Euseb. l. iii. 32, iv. 22. Clemens Alexandrin. *Stromat.* vii. 17.

more propriety, that, during that period, the disciples of the Messiah were indulged in a freer latitude, both of faith and practice, than has ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the terms of communion were insensibly narrowed, and the spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with increasing severity, many of its most respectable adherents, who were called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert, their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the church. The Gnostics were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy, of the Christian name; and that general appellation, which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They were almost, without exception, of the race of the Gentiles; and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the warmth of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to indolent and contemplative devotion. The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from Oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world.* As soon as they launched out into that vast abyss, they delivered themselves to the guidance of a disordered imagination; and as the paths of error are various and infinite, the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects,† of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and, in a still later period, the Manichæans. Each of these sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and martyrs;‡ and, instead of the four gospels adopted by the church, the heretics produced a multitude of histories, in which the actions and discourses of Christ and

* In the account of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid; Le Clerc dull, but exact; Beausobre almost always an apologist; and it is much to be feared that the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.

† See the catalogues of Irenæus and Epiphanius. It must indeed be allowed, that those writers were inclined to multiply the number of sects which opposed the *unity* of the church.

‡ Eusebius, l. iv. c. 15. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 32. See in Bayle, in the article of Marcion, a curious detail of a dispute on that subject. It should seem that some of the Gnostics (the Basilidians) declined and even refused the honour of martyrdom. Their reasons were singular and abstruse. See Mosheim, p. 359.

of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets. The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive.† They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the west. For the most part they arose in the second century, flourished during the third, and were suppressed in the fourth or fifth by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendant of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of Christianity. The Gentile converts whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefitted by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies.‡

The demons considered as the gods of antiquity.—But whatever difference of opinion might subsist between the Orthodox, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obligation of the Mosaic law, they were all equally animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the same abhorrence for idolatry, which had distinguished the Jews from the other nations of the ancient world. The philosopher, who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery or the compliance, would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of Paganism were seen by the primitive Christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the uni-

* See a very remarkable passage of Origen, (Proem. ad Lucan.) That indefatigable writer, who had consumed his life in the study of the Scriptures, relies for their authenticity on the inspired authority of the church. It was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the resurrection of Christ) are directly, and, as it might seem designedly, pointed against their favourite tenets. It is therefore somewhat singular, that Ignatius (Epist. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apostol. tom. ii. p. 34,) should chuse to employ a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the Evangelists.

† *Faciunt savos et vespæ; faciunt ecclesias et marcionitæ*, is the strong expression of Tertullian, which I am obliged to quote from memory. In the time of Epiphanius (advers. Hæreses, p. 302) the Marcionites were very numerous in Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.

‡ Augustin is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from reason to faith. He was, during several years, engaged in the Manichæan sect.

versal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the dæmons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry.* Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds of sinful men. The dæmons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion; and, artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honours of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism; one dæmon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of Æsculapius, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo;† and that, by the advantage of their long experience and aerial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The Christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every preternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant actions of the Pagan mythology. But the belief of the Christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a direct homage yielded to the dæmon, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

Abhorrence of the Christians for idolatry.—In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled from the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without,

* The unanimous sentiment of the primitive church is very clearly explained by Justin. Martyr. Apolog. Major, by Athenagoras Legat, c. 22, &c. and by Lactantius, Institut. Divin. ii, 14-19.

† Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23) alleges the confession of the dæmons themselves as often as they were tormented by the Christian exorcists.

at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society.* The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate.† The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans; and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honour of their peculiar festivals.‡ The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness.§ When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymenæal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation;|| or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile;¶ the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols, was polluted by the stain of idolatry;** a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community, which is employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions.

* Tertullian has written a most severe treatise against idolatry, to caution his brethren against the hourly danger of incurring that guilt. *Recogita sylvam, et quantæ latitant spinæ. De Coronâ Militis, c. 10.*

† The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place (*Aulus Gellius, xiv. 7*). Before they entered on business, every senator dropt some wine and frankincense on the altar. *Sueton. in August. c. 35.*

‡ See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. This severe reformer shews no more indulgence to a tragedy of Euripides, than to a combat of gladiators. The dress of the actors particularly offends him. By the use of the lofty buskin, they impiously strive to add a cubit to their stature, *c. 23.*

§ The ancient practice of concluding the entertainment with libations may be found in every classic. Socrates and Seneca, in their last moments, made a noble application of this custom. *Postquam stagnum calidæ aquæ introiit, respergens proximos servorum, additâ voce, libare se liquorum illum Jovi Liberatori. Tacit. Annal. xv. 64.*

|| See the elegant but idolatrous hymns of Catullus, on the nuptials of Manlius and Julian. *O Hymen, Hymenæe Iô! Quis huic Deo comparier ausit?*

¶ The ancient funerals (in those of Misenus and Pallas) are no less accurately described by Virgil, than they are illustrated by his commentator Servius. The pile itself was an altar, the flames were fed with the blood of victims, and all the assistants were sprinkled with lustral water.

** Tertullian *de Idololatria, c. 11.*

(To be continued.)

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